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Lucia A Keegan 08/25/2006 10:35:49 AM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Iran Lebanon - UNIFIL - Israel -
Iran
PARIS - Thursday, August 24, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

UNIFIL
Israel
Iran

(B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

The situation in Lebanon and the domestic criticism in Israel of the military and political failures during the war are relegated to the inside pages of most of the national dailies with the exception of Catholic La Croix that headlines: "Europe is Counting its Troops" and left-of-center Liberation's lead: "Israel: The Bitter Post-War." Iran's response to the call for it to stop its nuclear program, while not front-page news, elicits some commentary namely concerning the fragile unity of the international community on the issue.

Popular right-of-center Le Parisien qualifies Israeli FM Tzipi

Livni's remarks yesterday as a "cry of alarm" concerning "the slowness of the international community to apply Resolution 1701." Livni's trip to Paris and Rome is a "veritable charm offensive designed to explain the reasons for the war in Lebanon and to justify, after the fact, an operation that is being seriously criticized even in Israel." For state-run France 2 television, yesterday was "a decisive day for diplomacy." Every network covered the visit with an emphasis on the Israeli FM's main message which was: "there is urgency today... the international community must react quickly." For state-run France 3 the Israeli FM is "firm and knows what she wants."

On France 2's evening newscast, General Pelegrini was shown describing the situation in southern Lebanon as: "very tense, very dangerous and volatile." On France 3's program 'Soir 3,' Middle East expert Antoine Sfeir said that "the deployment of the Lebanese army is a wonderful opportunity to affirm the government's sovereignty."

Catholic La Croix's lead story examines the constitution of the UNIFIL under the headline "Europe Counts Its Troops." In Europe there is consensus "neither as to the composition of the international force... nor on its mandate." La Croix notes "no significant advances" among EU ministers in Brussels yesterday (See Part C). The article enumerates the "different objectives sought by the principal regional and international actors": "Paris demands a clear mandate"; "The United States is disposed to a clarification"; "Israel calls for rapid deployment"; "Syria is hostile to an international force"; and "Lebanon wants to regain its sovereignty." La Croix further mentions President Bush's desire to create a "security buffer" in southern Lebanon, as well as the U.S.'s wider role. "The Americans have no intention of sending troops, but they are pressing France to do so."

Left-of-center Le Monde's editorial: "Crisis in Israel" says that a majority of Israelis see the military intervention in Lebanon as a "political and military fiasco." (See Part C)

On Iran, left-of-center Le Monde underscores that "the consensus reached by the great powers on the issue of Iran is weakened by the conflict in Lebanon... and the notion that the Iranian issue and the sudden escalation of violence in Lebanon in July are related is popular in Washington." Right-of-center Le Figaro also reports that the "Iranian response has divided the great powers," and left-of-center Liberation, based on an Agence France Presse wire story, reports that while the Europeans "were trying to avoid being too blunt concerning Iran's response... The Americans were extremely clear saying that the response does not fulfill the conditions set out by the UN to avoid sanctions." (See Part C)

Mouna Naim in an analysis in left-of-center Le Monde explains that "Lebanon has always counted on foreign support... Today, the opposition accuses the government of relying too heavily on France and the United States... The specificity of Hezbollah is that it was created after Iran's model and the influence of Iran is now obvious... Today Hezbollah seems to be divided between extremists and the moderates, with Nasrallah counting as a 'moderate' who wants to maintain the Lebanese specificity of Hezbollah." For Mouna Naim, Iran appears pleased with the turn of events in Lebanon... Hezbollah has in effect proved to both Israel and the United States what Iran can do if attacked.

In an article entitled: "Desperately Seeking Fresh Troops," Philippe Gangereau in left-of-center Liberation mentions the Pentagon's announcement on Tuesday that it intends to call in reserves to serve in Iraq. "The war in Iraq needs soldiers... but despite financial incentives and active recruiting... the drop in the number of volunteers is constant since 2004... Recruitment criteria have become suppler and today the military will take on soldiers who have police records or minor physical handicaps... The percentage of these 'grade B' recruits has steadily increased since 2001... This laxity is not without consequences. The military authorities are currently investigating charges that five soldiers in Iraq raped and killed a young Iraqi girl in March."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

UNIFIL

"Time to Get Involved"

François Ernenwein's editorial in Catholic La Croix (08/24): "It obviously becoming urgent to send UN troops to Lebanon... Because the great powers (with the U.S. and France in the lead) dragged their feet for so long to stop the war, it is justified now to expect them to hasten the pace for peace... A well defined mandate and clear rules of engagement are necessary but not sufficient... Peace is a political process, but the international community carries the stigmata of years of discredit and negligence with regard to conflicts in the Middle East... The fact that Europe's position on the Middle East is less shadowy than the U.S.'s is no excuse... Today the EU will have to meditate on its past procrastination when forced to send troops to promote peace."

"The 25 Condemned to Seeking Consensus on the UNIFIL"

In economic right-of-center Les Echos Catherine Chatignoux writes (08/24): "Once again Europe is waking up late and risks paying a high cost for its powerlessness... Throughout the conflict all of the European countries played solo... without the slightest hint of an exchange of views or the smallest meeting to discuss the situation... Europe gives the impression that it is making it up as it goes along... And the absence of consultation and a common foreign policy explains that Europe, which is far from weighing in on world matters, is sentenced today to playing a dangerous role in a region where it has little influence."

Israel

"Crisis in Israel"

The unsigned editorial in left-of-center Le Monde (08/24): "The revolt of the Israeli reservists is merely the most visible display of the broader demands of a population that has been 'shocked' by the military, political and social failures of its government... Nonetheless, this crisis has served to prove the extent to which democracy is established in Israel."

"Great Void"

Pierre Haski's editorial in left-of-center Liberation (08/24): "Israel is facing three painful facts: this time it takes no pride, as is usually the case, in its military prowess... because Tsahal's missiles did not attain their objective and because Iran is brazenly showing off its power, Israel has been deprived of its strategic certainties... Israel lacks credible leadership at a time in history when the threats and challenges are shifting... This great conceptual void is of particular concern and the promise of unilateral withdrawal that got Ehoud Olmert elected is compromised... In this context the temptation for revenge, militarily, would be the worst response to Israel's post-war blues."

Iran

"The Iranian Response Divides The Great Powers"

Alain Barluet in right-of-center Le Figaro (08/24): "The ambiguity of the Iranian response introduces an element of division within the international community. Iran's sinuosity may destroy the international community's principal asset which is the fragile unity that was forged with great effort by the French, American, British, Russian Chinese and German diplomats... With the added tensions created by the war in the Middle East, the divisions are in danger of becoming even deeper. Re-establishing a sense of unity will be further hindered by fact that Hizbullah's 'psychological victory' enables Teheran to use the threat of its capacity to do harm as a sort of scarecrow... The turn of events in southern Lebanon has also served to convince the Europeans that military solutions are not adapted to settling regional crises." ROSENBALTT